

The True Citizen

Students honor special education class for contributions

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BOE-Above, lunchroom aids from the special education class were honored by students in the JPN Leadership Program, who also helped with the cleanup duties.

She never knew they were the ones working behind the scenes.

When high school senior Dajiah Thomas caught a glimpse of them, though, she knew these special schoolmates needed to be recognized.

As the Burke County High School cafeteria clears after each lunch period during the school day, students in the self-contained special education class grab their brooms and rags to clean the tables, chairs, dishes and floors and prepare for the next rush of students to take their seats.

It's all part of their curriculum, which teaches students in these classes about job duties and employment. The lunchroom aids get paid for their work, but rarely receive



any recognition from the students they clean up after.

Dajiah and a few classmates happened to see them one day while eating a late lunch after returning from dual-enrollment classes at Augusta Technical College.



"There were trays left on tables and trash to be picked up, and they were doing all of this work," Dajiah recalls, noting that all their effort often goes unnoticed by the general student population.

So Dajiah and her classmate Vernice Singleton developed a program to honor these students, from helping them with their lunchroom duties to volunteering with the school system's Special Olympics event. They enlisted help from fellow members of the JPN Leadership Program, which was started at BCHS last year to encourage students to make a positive difference in their communities.



One recent Friday, they surprised the students when they came to carry out their usual lunchroom duties.

Dajiah and Vernice, along with several other classmates, had decorated two tables for the students to eat at and held an awards ceremony to present them with certificates of appreciation.

"They were so happy about their certificates, Vernice says. "They wouldn't have given those up for anything."



And when the time came for the clean up to begin, Dajiah, Vernice and their friends picked up rags and brooms themselves and helped.

Dajiah and Vernice said it was such a hit with the students, including those in the special education class as well as the ones who helped, that they hope to begin doing this on a regular basis as part of a program they've developed through JPN called Winners Appreciation.

If all goes as planned, they will even film a video showing the hard work the lunchroom aids put in each day that can be shown to classes during the homeroom period.

JPN Leadership Project ... Dajiah Thomas and Vernice Singleton



Burke County H. S. Special Olympics 2015

Awards Ceremony

Dajiah

Vernice